

Presentation Pro

Magruder's American Government

CHAPTER 9 *Interest Groups*

Interest Groups

SECTION 1 The Nature of Interest Groups

SECTION 2 Types of Interest Groups

SECTION 3 Interest Groups at Work

The Nature of Interest Groups

- What role do interest groups have in influencing public policy?
- How can we compare and contrast political parties and interest groups?
- Why do people see interest groups as both good and bad for American politics?



The Role of Interest Groups

- Interest groups are private organizations whose members share certain views and work to shape public policy.
- **Public policy** includes all of the goals a government sets and the various courses of action it pursues as it attempts to realize these goals.
- Interest groups exist to shape public policy.



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Political Parties and Interest Groups

Political parties and interest groups differ in three striking respects: (1) in the making of nominations, (2) in their primary focus, and (3) in the scope of their interests.

Nominations

- Political parties are responsible for the nominating process, while interest groups hope to influence those nominations.

Primary Focus

- Political parties are interested in winning elections and controlling government, while interest groups are interested in influencing the policies created by government.

Scope of Interest

- Political parties concern themselves with the whole range of public affairs, while interest groups tend to focus on issues that their members are concerned about.



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Valuable Functions of Interest Groups

- Interest groups raise awareness of **public affairs**, or issues that concern the people at large.
- Interest groups represent people who share attitudes rather than those who share geography.
- Interest groups provide specialized information to government agencies and legislators.
- Interest groups are vehicles for political participation.
- Interest groups keep tabs on various public agencies and officials.
- Interest groups compete.



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Criticisms

- Some groups have an influence far out of proportion to their size or importance.
- It can be difficult to tell who or how many people are served by a group.
- Groups do not always represent the views of the people they claim to speak for.
- In rare cases, groups use tactics such as bribery, threats, and so on.



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Section 1 Review

1. What is the role of interest groups?

- (a) Raising the interest rate
- (b) Organizing party conventions
- (c) Influencing public policy
- (d) All of the above

2. Which of the following is not a criticism of interest groups?

- (a) They keep tabs on public agencies.
- (b) They may not represent the views of all of their members.
- (c) Some use underhanded tactics.
- (d) Some have undue influence.

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Types of Interest Groups

- How has the American tradition of joining organizations resulted in a wide range of interest groups?
- What are the four categories of groups based on economic interests?
- What are the reasons other interest groups have formed?
- What is the purpose of public-interest groups?



Reasons for Interest Groups

- Most interest groups have been founded on the basis of an economic interest, especially business, labor, agricultural, and professional interests.
- Some are grounded in geographic area.
- Some are based on a cause or idea, such as environmental protection.
- Some promote the welfare of certain groups of people, such as retired citizens.
- Some are run by religious organizations.



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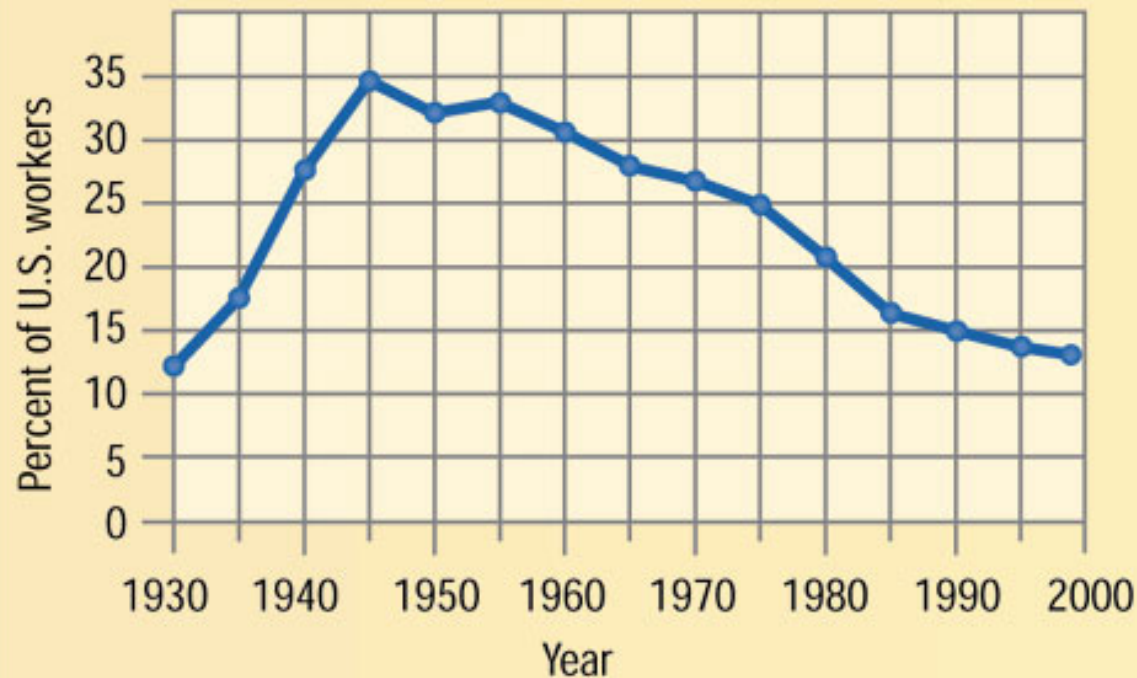
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Membership in Labor Unions

Membership in Labor Unions



Note: Statistics are for nonfarm employees.

SOURCE: AFL-CIO



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Public-Interest Groups

A **public-interest group** is an interest group that seeks to institute certain public policies that will benefit all or most of the people in the country, whether or not they belong to that organization.



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Section 2 Review

1. What kind of an interest group is the National Bar Association?

- (a) Religious
- (b) Professional
- (c) Agricultural
- (d) Labor Union

2. The Wilderness Society is what type of interest group?

- (a) Agricultural
- (b) Cause-related
- (c) Professional
- (d) Public-interest

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Interest Groups at Work

- What are interest groups' three major goals in influencing public opinion?
- How do interest groups use propaganda to persuade people to their point of view?
- How do interest groups try to influence political parties and elections?
- How does lobbying bring group pressures to bear on the process of making public policy?



Influencing Public Opinion

Interest groups reach out to the public for these reasons:

1. To supply information in support of the group's interests
2. To build a positive image for the group
3. To promote a particular public policy



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Propaganda

- **Propaganda** is a technique of persuasion aimed at influencing individual or group behaviors.
- Its goal is to create a particular belief which may be true or false.
- Propaganda disregards information that does not support its conclusion. It is not objective. It presents only one side of an issue.
- Propaganda often relies on name-calling and inflammatory labels.



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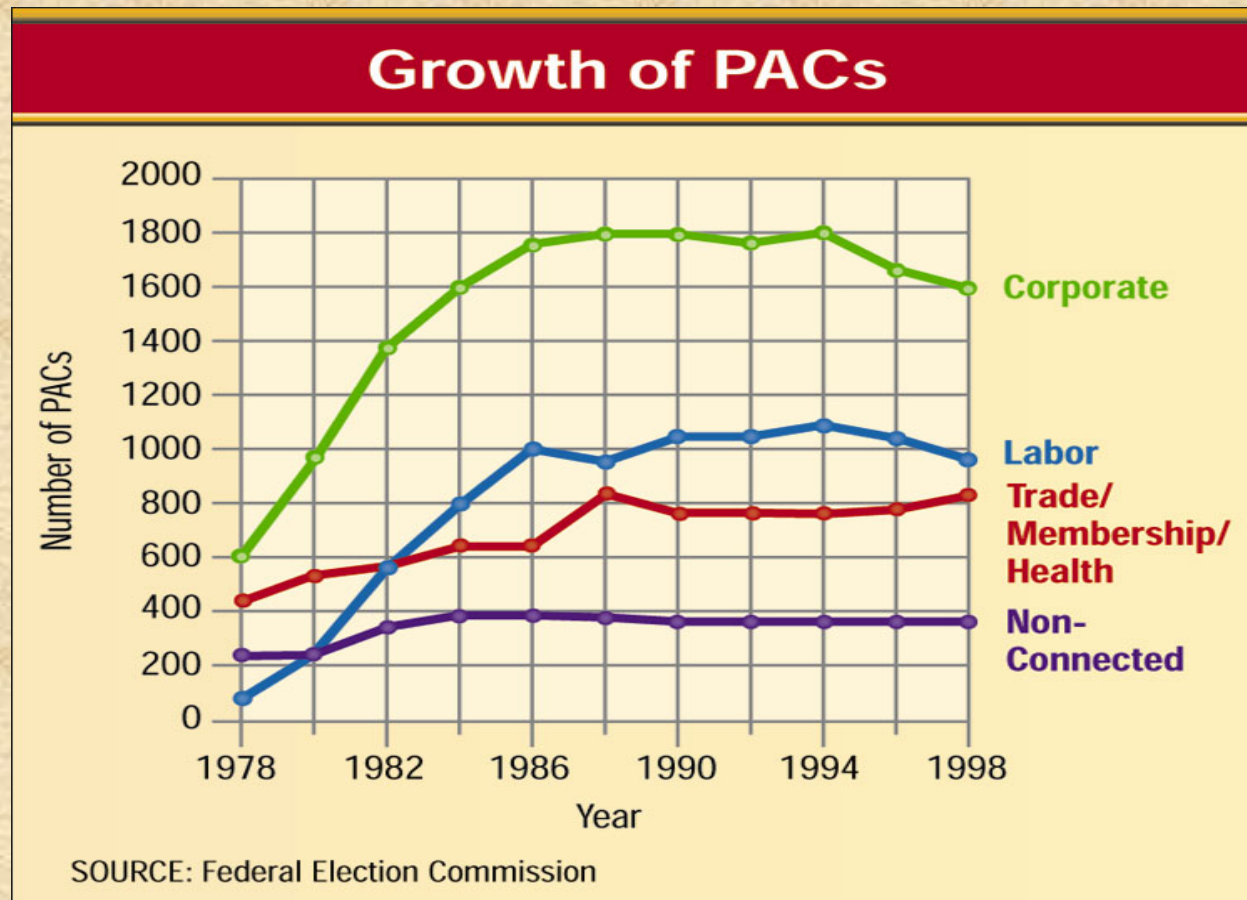
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Influencing Parties and Elections

- **Political Action Committees** (PACs) raise and distribute money to candidates who will further their goals.



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Lobbying

- **Lobbying** is any activity by which a group pressures legislators and influences the legislative process.
- Lobbying carries beyond the legislature. It is brought into government agencies, the executive branch, and even the courts.
- Nearly all important organized interest groups maintain lobbyists in Washington, D.C.



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Lobbyists at Work

Lobbyists use several techniques:

- They send articles, reports, and other information to officeholders.
- They testify before legislative committees.
- They bring “grass-roots” pressures to bear through email, letters, or phone calls from constituents.
- They rate candidates and publicize the ratings.
- They make campaign contributions.



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Section 3 Review

1. What is propaganda?

- (a) A bill that has been vetoed
- (b) A one-sided argument
- (c) An objective description
- (d) A scientific paper

2. How do lobbyists influence legislators?

- (a) Campaign contributions
- (b) “Grass roots” campaigns
- (c) Publicized ratings
- (d) All of the above

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